eWiSACWIS
Quality
Improvement
Project

Final Report

DECEMBER 2005

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PURPOSE OF eWiSACWIS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

History of Project

The eWiSACWIS Quality Improvement Project had its beginnings during conversations between county departments of social/human services directors and staff and Secretary Helene Nelson of the Department of Health and Family Services (DHFS) in which counties indicated the need for system improvements. In addition, during November 2004 the Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) in DHFS conducted a web survey of eWiSACWIS users. The survey was designed to determine the level of user satisfaction and the user responses indicated concerns with aspects of system operation.

To respond to the user concerns, the DCFS Administrator stated in the transmittal memo to counties on the survey results that an eWiSACWIS quality improvement (QI) initiative would be formed. The initial input for the project was gathered at a County Directors session at the Public Child Welfare Conference on April 11, 2005. At the direction of Secretary Nelson, a DHFS staff team was formed to support the project. Additional input on the project was obtained from system users at the May 11, 2005 Program Activity Workgroup (PAW) and Technical Activity Workgroup (TAW) meeting. The work of the QI Project Steering Committee took place during June to December 2005.

Project Goals

The QI Project Plan included three major goals for the project:
1. Use quality improvement methodology to analyze data (customer surveys, system metrics, etc.), interview and observe workers, and consult with users of the system to determine changes needed. Reinforce the approach that the people who use eWiSACWIS and practice child welfare drive system changes to be implemented.
2. Implement changes in system process, training, and procedures that will reduce workload and increase satisfaction as quickly as possible. Increase efficiency of the system and productivity of workers with the goal of improving the quality of the interaction and increasing worker time with families.
3. Develop a sustainable continuous quality improvement (CQI) process, using the goals of efficiency, effectiveness, and error handling and recovery, and assign responsibility that could include regularly scheduled worker surveys, a regular user advisory group, eWiSACWIS reports on use and practice for feedback, and review of the change management process.

Project Activities

The project work plan included data collection activities to gather more information from users regarding system usability and communication to validate concerns from the user survey. Other information was presented to the Steering Committee, including the current change management process, objectives for system usability, best practices for

web-based system design, and the system advisory committee model used by the Income Maintenance Advisory Committee.

The site visits were used to collect information from county staff regarding use of the system in their local work environment. Documents[1] produced and presented to the Steering Committee include the Site Visit Report, the Communication Audit, and the Ease of Use Action Plan.

KEY FINDINGS AND GUIDANCE

Findings

The site visits indicated the following:

- Users understand the value of the system, their work environment is very complex, and their focus is understandably on the families they serve.
- The system has multiple user groups to consider, including the families, courts, district attorneys and other agencies that are end recipients of work done in the system by the county staff. As an example, county users indicated the readability of system-generated documents is not effective for these end recipients.
- Current system performance creates insecurity among users and the system is not flexible enough from a user perspective.
- The system does not leverage the information it has to help users be more efficient.
- The user interface should reflect interactive design patterns best practices.

Limited feedback to system users was another of the major findings. Because the eWiSACWIS Quality Improvement Project Steering Committee wanted to know more about that, the Communications Audit was completed. The findings of that audit include:

- The responsibility for communication is decentralized; there is no explicit communication lead or individual with communications expertise. This includes email list management, which at times is a manual process.
- While it was found the credibility of communication increases when the source of the communication is closest to the user, the communication to front-line staff is largely dependent upon supervisors.
- Communication is event-driven and reactive and geared toward super-users and technical staff.
- Communication focuses primarily on responding to system issues, but in order for users to be effective in their positions, they also need to understand the underlying policy.

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[1] The documents can be found at:
Site Visit Report http://www.dhfs.state.wi.us/qi/9-29-05mtgSiteVisitRep.pdf
Communications Audit http://www.dhfs.state.wi.us/qi/communicationsauditreportREV1.pdf.
Ease of Use Plan http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/qi/easeofuseplanREV4.pdf

- It is important to continue to deliver information through multiple channels (web, e-mal, help desk, etc.) due to the diversity of users.
- In-person, face-to-face communication by both county and state staff is perceived as high value; it is the preferred method of getting inquiries resolved and receiving training.

Guidance

Short-term and long-term steps can be taken to make eWiSACWIS easier to use. Guidance is provided in several areas and is based on meeting the usability objectives of efficiency, effectiveness and error tolerance, with an emphasis on maximizing users time with families. They also reflect issues raised by end-users who participated in the site visits and communications audit.

1. In the area of usability, the guidance includes:
   - Implement a user centered design and development process.
   - Establish a goal to eliminate end-users having to enter data into the system more than once.
   - Review and revise the eWiSACWIS Style Guide and associated system functionality to support system ease of use and web-based interaction conventions.
   - Confirm that the recently implemented changes to the search functionality meet end-user needs through usability testing. Modify search functionality if usability test results indicate the need for further revision.
   - Implement a process for editing work after it has been saved and correcting errors in the system.
   - Revise the format of system generated documents to meet the needs of the range of end-users (i.e., workers, judges, clients and program managers).
   - Refine communication channels based on Communications Audit recommendations.
   - Leverage common web application functionality to enhance efficiency, including the ability of workers to collaborate as a team on cases.
   - Leverage common web application functionality to enhance efficiency, including the ability of workers to collaborate as a team on cases.
   - Establish benchmarks for end-user competence with the tool. Strive for a "zero" training goal, meaning that users should be able to become proficient on the primary tasks required for them to complete their job responsibilities without out formal training support after they have completed policy training.

2. To enhance communication and usability, it is recommended that the Department of Health and Family Services:
   - Identify a communication lead to coordinate a multi-channel communication program on an ongoing basis.
   - Move toward an automated, user-driven communication model, based on user roles, security profiles and individual needs.

- Structure communication to provide "need to know" information first. "Nice to know" information should be offered as an optional link or positioned further down the message.
- Identify web metrics to monitor online resources to better understand user behavior and measure progress in enhancing the ease of use of the communication resources.
- Develop on-line resources that are user focused.
- Schedule and deliver refresher training and system updates on an ongoing basis.
- Support workers need to understand both the policy and the system.
- Use face-to-face communication (e.g., in-person training) to deliver high value communication and reinforce written and online communication.
- Leverage the credibility of county technical staff, super users and county contacts.
- Establish a team and a process to revise system generated documents to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of end users while achieving program objectives.
- Consider alternative communication tools as new options arise and needs change.

3. The Steering Committee reviewed the usability findings and identified the following as action steps that will be used to improve the system[2] on an ongoing basis:
   - Process Review – how the system supports local work processes
   - Best Practices Review – how the system can be used most effectively
   - Readability Evaluation – of system-generated documents
   - Training – for new users and system enhancements

4. As a case management system to support child welfare practice, it is important that the usability of the system be a primary consideration in pursuing system modifications. Usability needs to be evolutionary, not revolutionary, meaning improving the usability of the system has to be done over time. The QI Project Steering Committee determined the following usability objectives should guide the change management process, and be incorporated into system enhancements that are driven by policy changes.[3]

   - **Efficiency** in that system users are able to achieve their work goals faster and less time is spent in the system, resulting in more time for family case work and other activities viewed as more important.
   - **Effectiveness** in that the users achieve the *right* goals which they set out to achieve in the system.
   - **Error Handling and Recovery** where the system limits the errors users encounter and helps in recovery thus minimizing the time and effort on behalf of the user.

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[2] More information about these recommendations can be found in the eWiSACWIS Quality Improvement Project Steering Committee September 29, 2005 meeting minutes at http://www.dhfs.state.wi.us/qi/92905steeringmeetingminutes.pdf.
[3] See the Usability Objectives Pros and Cons Report at http://www.dhfs.state.wi.us/qi/usabilityobjectivesprosconsv1.pdf

It is important to note the activities of the QI Project will interface with the activities of the Program Enhancement Plan (PEP)[4] which is underway state-wide. Several enhancements to the system are currently in process associated with PEP action steps.

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION PLANS

The eWiSACWIS Quality Improvement Project Team recommendations have generated an action plan for improving how the system supports users. The objective is to achieve efficiency in case practice and be more effective in achieving safety and permanency outcomes for children and families. The major areas for the action plans include communication with users, change management process, system advisory committee, revising system generated reports, editing documents and correcting errors, training and user support, and system enhancements.

Communication with System Users

1.   The Program and Technical Activity Workgroups (PAW/TAW).
        Examples of communication changes already implemented include:
        o   highlighting critical messages in red,
        o   keeping county contacts better informed about system bugs, and
        o   sharing pre-release notes with county contacts for comment.

        Planned changes include:
        o   web casts for pre-release notes, and
        o   developing a bulletin board to obtain broader user input on system issues.

2.   Continued use of user surveys and other data collection mechanisms to monitor user satisfaction with the system and identify suggestions for system improvements.

Change Management Process

The change management process for implementing system bug fixes and enhancements will be improved by:
- Incorporating efficiency, effectiveness and error handing usability objectives into priority setting and change management process. These usability objectives have been established as guiding principles for changes to the system and are being used to set priorities for system modification and develop changes for future releases.
- Conducting on-site usability sessions to evaluate how the system is used in local work environments, both to identify needs for system improvements as well as to develop enhancements with local work environments in mind.
- Increasing user participation in the change management process including use of site observations, teleconferences and web casts for enhancement projects. Users will be more broadly involved in developing business requirements, system design and user

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[4] Information on PEP activities can be found at http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/cwreview/PEP.htm.

acceptance testing. The eWiSACWIS incident tracking database will be changed to a web application to allow users to more easily track the status of their incidents reported to the help desk.

- Implementing recommendations from the Ease of Use Plan completed by Evantage Consulting. Some recommendations can be accomplished in the short term, while other recommendations are long term in nature.

System Advisory Committee

A new eWiSACWIS Advisory Committee will be established with a mix of staff including county directors/program managers, child welfare supervisors, line workers and technical staff to set priorities for system changes and support of users. The Advisory Committee will be staffed by DCFS and begin meeting in the first quarter of calendar year 2006. The eWiSACWIS Advisory Committee will be modeled after the IT subcommittee of the Income Maintenance Advisory Committee (IMAC) for the CARES (Client Assistance for Re-employment and Economic Support) system. The eWiSACWIS advisory committee will have linkages with the Wisconsin County Human Services Association (WCHSA) and the semi-annual PAW/TAW meeting.

Revising System Generated Documents

A new committee with representation including a mix of county directors and line staff, Bureau of Programs and Policies managers and staff, Office of Program Evaluation and Planning staff, Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare staff, State Training Partnership staff, and the Director of State Courts Office staff will have a kick-off meeting in January 2006 to discuss streamlining and reducing complexity when doing plans and assessments in eWiSACWIS. They will look at developing a process that is more efficient, better engages families, more accurately represents services and goals, and provides conditions for return consistent with the court order.

Editing Documents and Correcting Errors

Within the limits of legal requirements to retain case information, a policy will be developed with the new eWiSACWIS Advisory Committee regarding the ability of users to edit documents once completed, to retrieve work and otherwise correct errors. The policy will guide decision making on the scope edit/correction capacity and the development of future system enhancements to improve error handling. Examples of edits and corrections that will be considered include allowing workers to edit case notes and supervisors to retrieve approvals. Ongoing data analysis will be done to identify aspects of the system prone to errors so that improvements can be made.

Training and User Support

System training and user support will be improved using the following strategies:

- Developing a comprehensive strategic plan to improve system training, including training for new users and system enhancements and coordination of system training with practice training through training partnerships. An eWiSACWIS training committee has been established by the Child Welfare Training Council to develop the strategic plan.
- Updating the eWiSACWIS web-based training modules (WBTs) to reflect recent system releases and making the demonstration databases more widely available as a training tool for local agencies.
- Holding regional meetings with super users to provide information on new releases, refresher training on areas of interest and planned changes to the system.
- Redesigning the Knowledge Web to make system guides and documents more accessible to users and improve the effectiveness of the Knowledge Web as a tool for supporting users.

System Enhancements

Enhancements have been and will continue to be implemented to improve the capacity of the system to support local agency work processes through efficient use of the system. Based on the usability objectives, enhancements will be pursued to improve safety and permanency outcomes for children and families and reduce user time to complete activities in the system.

Examples of recent enhancements include:
- Improvements to search functionality
- Reduction of duplicate data entry
- Reports dashboard for visual presentation of data

Improvements in upcoming releases include:
- Simplify supervisor approval (December release)
- Provider merge (December and March releases)
- Access/redesign of intake process (March release)
- Simplify Ongoing Model family assessment/case plan (June release)

CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

The recommendations of the eWiSACWIS Quality Improvement Project will be incorporated into the ongoing management of the eWiSACWIS system, using a continuous quality improvement (CQI) process that is user focused and guided by the usability objectives adopted during the project.

The usability objectives of efficiency, effectiveness and error handling will be applied to new system functionality through enhancements by incorporating the following procedures into the change management process:

1. Establish the objectives as the guiding principles of the change management selection and prioritization process for enhancements and defects.
2. Inclusion of a new section in the Change Order request template that adds the usability objectives as a design requirement.
3. Apply the objectives to the design of all new functionality resulting from Change Orders.
4. Inform all staff of the usability objectives as the guiding principles for design session leadership and results and provide training to staff on usability techniques.
5. Implement a web-based "change management - enhancement request tracking tool" that includes a drop down value to identify the usability objective(s) of the request for enhanced user communication.
6. Include information on the usability objectives and change management process at PAW/TAW workshops and distribute the information to all counties per the communication plan.

The eWiSACWIS advisory committee will allow active user participation in establishing priorities for system improvement and ensure that the needs of users are identified through site observations, user metrics, user surveys and other data collection methods. DCFS will involve the advisory committee in setting short-term and long-term goals for system modifications that will improve the usability of the system. The objectives of efficiency, effectiveness and error handling will guide decisions on including enhancements in maintenance releases and the timing for implementing enhancements.

The semi-annual PAW/TAW meetings will continue to be used to get broad participation from system users on specific aspects of system operation, including system functionality, technical support of users, and use of system data for local program management purposes. In addition, efforts will be made to expand the scope of county contacts for system communication purposes and provide more in-depth communication about system operation and the status of system improvements.

The CQI process will rely on the following measures of success to determine that system improvements are achieving the desired results:

- Worker time using eWiSACWIS contributes to the productive use of time in support of keeping children safe and achieving permanency based on worker survey results.
- User satisfaction is increased in the use of eWiSACWIS evidenced by user surveys and system usage metrics.
- County agency managers report greater success in using eWiSACWIS data and reports to manage their child welfare programs.

STEERING COMMITTEE

Membership

The membership of the QI Project Steering Committee for the project included a mix of county directors, child welfare managers or supervisors, child welfare workers, and county technical staff. Members included volunteer counties who were either nominated for participation by the Wisconsin County Human Services Association (WCHSA) or expressed interest directly to the Department. Membership also included a variety of staff from DHFS.

Sue Reinardy, Deputy Secretary of DHFS was the Executive Sponsor for the project and Mary Ellen Havel-Lang from the Office of Strategic Finance was the Project Manager. A team of DHFS staff also provided support to the project.   To assist with the project, the Department contracted with The Management Group (TMG)[5], who subcontracted with Evantage Consulting[6].

A complete list of membership is included in this report as Attachment A.

Meetings

The Steering Committee met four times – June 22, September 29, November 15, and December 20, 2005. Meeting minutes and materials can be found at http://www.dhfs.state.wi.us/qi/steeringcomm.htm.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For addition information on the eWiSACWIS Quality Improvement Project, please visit http://www.dhfs.state.wi.us/qi/.

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[5] TMG is a consulting, staffing and educational services firm located in Madison, Wisconsin.

[6] Evantage Consulting is a Minneapolis, Minnesota based management consulting firm.

Steering Committee Members

NAME	REPRESENTING	TITLE
Angeli, Jon	Grant County Department of Social Services	Director
Campbell, Mark	DHFS – Division of Children & Family Services	Director, Bureau of Programs and Policies
Fiss, Bill	DHFS – Division of Children & Family Services	Deputy Administrator
Gates, Diane	LaCrosse County Human Services	CPS Ongoing Supervisor
Jensen, Julie	Marathon County Department of Social Services	Social Work Supervisor
Johnson, Glen Rogalski, Colleen	Waushara County Department of Human Services	Director
MacDonald, Tom	LaFayette County Human Services	Director
Maples, Stuart	Manitowoc County Human Services Department	Computer Technician/Trainer
Miles, Dee Jaye	Green County Human Services	Children, Youth & Families Supervisor
Mireles, Jesse	Waukesha County Department of Health & Human Services	Human Services Manager, Children & Families Division
Mueller, Sarah	Sheboygan County Health & Human Services Department	Social Worker
Orth, Bill	Sauk County Department of Human Services	Director
Parks, Allen	Brown County Department of Human Services	Director
Pritzl, Erik	Dane County Department of Human Services	Social Work Supervisor
Reinardy, Sue	Project Executive Sponsor DHFS, Secretary's Office	Deputy Secretary
Sarvela, Mark	DCFS, Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare	Program Evaluation Manager
Stauffer, Alan	Waupaca County Department of Health & Human Services	Manager, Children & Families Division

Tuohy, John	DHFS, Division of Children & Family Services	Director, Office of Program Evaluation and Planning
Venne, Jenell	BMCW, Child and Families Community Partnership, Site 5	Social Work Supervisor
Webb, Denise	DHFS, Division of Management and Technology	Chief Information Officer Director, Bureau of Information Systems
Wright, Carol	Marquette County Department of Human Services	Director

Staff to the Steering Committee

NAME	REPRESENTING	TITLE
Jane Bungum	Evantage Consulting	Consultant
Groth, Gary	DHFS, Office of Strategic Finance	Human Services Area Coordinator, Southeastern Regional Office
Havel-Lang, Mary Ellen	Project Manager DHFS, Office of Strategic Finance	Program Auditor
Johnson, Amy	CGI-AMS	eWiSACWIS Vendor Manager
Johnson, Kate	DHFS, Division of Children & Family Services	Out of Home Planner
Klick, Connie	DHFS, Division of Children & Family Services	Manager, Child Welfare & Family Violence Program
McDowell, Steve	DHFS, Bureau of Information Systems	eWiSACWIS Technical Manager
Rose, Joyce	DHFS, Bureau of Information Systems	eWiSACWIS Project Director
Tropman, Peter	The Management Group	Principal
Verban, Dave	The Management Group	Program Information & Management Analyst
Wydeven, Beth	DHFS, Division of Children & Family Services	eWiSACWIS Functional Manager